

Adonai (Adonay) & Elohim/El/Eloah

אלה / אל / אלוהים & אֲדֹנָי

Except for "YHWH", the two most common names/titles for GOD in the Biblia Hebraica (Hebrew Bible) are "Adonai" and "Elohim". Apart from the name "YHWH", the designations "Adonai" and "Elohim" say more about the GOD of Israel than any other name. Certainly, all that the names embody deserve considerable deliberation.

Because the two words are so similar to each other and are often combined in the Old Testament, I thought it logical to study these two names together.

Etymology

Adonai: "Adonai" derives from the Hebrew root "adon" (pronounced 'âdôn) ("אֲדֹנָי"), meaning **master, owner, or sovereign ruler**. Thus, when referring to the GOD of Israel, the name expresses the **authority** and the **exalted position** of GOD. In the ordinary sense, "adon" refers to both human and divine relationships. The word "adon" (plural "adonai") appears ±335 times throughout Scripture, frequently in reference to a servant's master or the family patriarch.

So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord (adon) is old, will I now have this pleasure?"
(Genesis 18:12 *parenthetical text added*)

"My lords (adonai)," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning."
(Genesis 19:2a *parenthetical text added*)

The angel answered me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord (Adon) of the whole world."
(Zechariah 6:5 *parenthetical text added*)

The name "Adonai" ("אֲדֹנָי") is the emphatic **plural** form of "adon" and is used exclusively as a proper name of God. Implicit in the name "Adonai" is not only the expectation of provision and protection, but also of potential profitability. That's why Abraham had the courage to ask the Lord for an heir immediately after Adonai promised to care for and protect him.

- ¹ After this, the word of the LORD (YHWH) came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your **very great reward**."
- ² But Abram said, "Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (YHWH), what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"

(Genesis 15:1-2 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

In referring to "Adonai" as "**a** proper name of God," we must not confuse this with **the** proper name, יהוה, of the **one true God**.

The name "Adonai" in and of itself, and not as a substitute for "YHWH", occurs ±430 times and generally denotes the **authority** and **exalted position** of GOD. Primarily, the name



stresses God's relationship to man as his **Master, Authority,** and **Provider** (not to be confused with YHWH Jireh, which means "GOD Sees" / "GOD Will Provide").

Elohim: The precise development of the word "elohim" (pronounced 'ĕlôhîym) is disputed. There are two prominent theories.

- Some believe it derives from the shorter Hebrew word "El" (pronounced 'êl) ("אֱלֹהִים") and a similar Hebrew word "'ayil" (ah'-yil) ("אֵיִל" in Hebrew), both of which mean **mighty, strong, or prominent** (as in "chief").
- Others believe it derives from the Hebrew form of "Eloah" (pronounced 'ĕlôahh) ("אֱלֹהִים"), a prolonged form of "'êl", which appears to be used most frequently when comparing **the** GOD to the gods of the pagan polytheistic religions, as in...

They sacrificed to demons, not God (Eloah),
to gods (elohim) they didn't know...
(Deuteronomy 32:17a WEB *parenthetical text added*).

In the natural, the word also refers to powerful men or judges.

The word "Eloah", in reference to YHWH, is the root of the Chaldee word "Eloi" ["עֲלוֹי"] (pronounced *el-o-ee'*), which Jesus uttered from the cross: And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). (Mark 15:34 *ref.* Psalm 22:1)

The use of "eloah" in the Bible is rare, occurring primarily in poetry and late prose, mainly in Job. The word "El", however, is itself translated "God" ±250 times and frequently in circumstances which especially indicate the great power of God. For example...

- **El Shaddai** (God Almighty or Almighty God) as in Genesis 17:1 — When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty (El Shaddai); walk before me faithfully and be blameless."
- **El Elyon** (God Most High) as in Genesis 14:18-19 — Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High (El Elyon), and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High (El Elyon), Creator of heaven and earth."
- **El Gibhor** (Strong & Mighty God) as in Isaiah 10:21 — A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God (El Gibhor).
- **El Tzur** (God our Rock) as in 2 Samuel 22:47 — "The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock (Tzur)! Exalted be my God, the Rock (El Tzur), my Savior!
- It is also one of the names given to the promised Messiah in Isaiah 9:6 — For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God (El Gibhor), Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- See *also* Genesis 7:1, 28:3, 35:11; Numbers 23:22; Joshua 3:10; 2 Samuel 22:31-32; Nehemiah 1:5, 9:32; Isaiah 9:6; Ezekiel 10.



"Elohim" ("אֱלֹהִים") is the **plural** form of "Eloah" and is the first name of God that occurs in Scripture.

"In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth."
(Genesis 1:1 TS)

The Bible uses "Elohim" when emphasizing God's **might, creative power, justice, and rulership**. The name refers especially to His **sovereignty, creative work, and mighty works**.

Although "Adonai" and "Elohim" are similar, the distinguishing attributes that differentiate them are that the name "Adonai" affirms God's **elevated position of authority and rulership**, whereas the name "Elohim" refers to Him as the **Creator** who **interacts** with and **reveals** Himself to His creation.

"Elohim" is both a proper name and an adjective.

Apart from the first two books of the Bible where "Elohim" is seen as a proper noun for the Creator, throughout the remaining Scriptures "Elohim" is more an appellative or designation. For example, in the frequent expression, "LORD *your God*" in most English Bibles, "LORD" ("YHWH") is the **proper name**, while "*your God*" ("your Elohim") defines the deity, thereby functioning as an adjective. Two other variations of this are "Elohai" (meaning "*my God*") and "Elohaynu" (meaning "*our God*").

As the Sovereign Authority and Creator over all creation, the name "Elohim" denotes God as the **supreme deity** of a person or people.

How are the names "Adonai", "Elohim", and "El"/Eloah represented in English?

As we learned in the previous study, to avoid violating the commandment "You shall not take the name of Yahweh ("יהוה") your God (Elohim) in vain" (Exodus 20:7), the vowels of "Adonay" ("Adonai") were inserted between the letters "YHWH", thus creating "יהוה". This was done to remind the reader to not pronounce the name "YHWH", but to say "Adonay" instead. In fact, the most current English versions of the Hebrew Scriptures now use "Adonai" almost exclusively in the place of "YHWH".

Adonai ("אֲדֹנָי"), in and of itself, represents GOD as our **Master** and **Sovereign Ruler**. and is transliterated "**Lord**", "**God**", or "**Sovereign**" whenever it refers to **the** GOD (as in "the Lord")—not as a Hebraic substitute for "יהוה". It is used ±325 times in the Old Testament and is especially prevalent in the books of Isaiah (30 times), Jeremiah (14 times), and almost exclusively in Ezekiel and Amos (208 times and 18 times respectively). Following is a mere sampling of the verses that use the name "Adonai" in the original Hebrew to describe our Most High GOD.

LORD (YHWH), our Lord (Adonai), how majestic is your name
in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens.
(Psalm 8:1 *parenthetical text added*)

Great is our Lord (Adonai) and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.
(Psalm 147:5 *parenthetical text added*)



What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?" declares the Lord (Adonai), the LORD (YHWH) Almighty.
(Isaiah 3:15 *parenthetical text added*)

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw **the Lord** (Adonai), high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.
(Isaiah 6:1 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

Then I heard the voice of the Lord (Adonai) saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"
(Isaiah 6:8 *parenthetical text added*)

But you, Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (YHWH), help me for your name's sake; out of the goodness of your love, deliver me.
(Psalm 109:21 *parenthetical text added*)

Elohim ("אֱלֹהִים"), as a designation or adjective, represents God's **might, creative power**, and **sovereign authority** over creation. It is translated "**God**" when referring to the Creator, as an appellative when GOD is seen interacting with humans (as in "*your/my/ our God*" or "*the God/the LORD God*"), or by inference.

The name "אֱלֹהִים" ("Elohim"/"Eloah"), transliterated "**God**", references GOD interacting with His creation and appears in ±1300 verses in the Old Testament:

- the compound name "יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים" ("YHWH Elohim") in ±75 verses;
- "your/our Elohim" in ±645 verses;
- "the Elohim of" in ±350 verses; and
- "Elohim" alone in 233 verses.

In the first two books of the Bible, the name portrays GOD as the transcendent Creator of the universe.

In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth.
(Genesis 1:1 *parenthetical text added*)

So God (Elohim) said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."
(Genesis 9:17 *parenthetical text added*)

I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God (Elohim). Then you will know that I am the LORD (YHWH) your God (Elohim), who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.
(Exodus 6:7 *parenthetical text added*)

Be careful that you do not forget the LORD (YHWH) your God (Elohim), failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.
(Deuteronomy 8:11 *parenthetical text added*)

May God (Elohim) arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him.
(Psalm 68:1 WEB *parenthetical text added*)



For this is what the LORD (YHWH) says--he who created the heavens,
he is God (Elohim); he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it;
he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited --
he says: "I am the LORD (YHWH), and there is no other."
(Isaiah 45:18 *parenthetical text added*)

For your Maker is your husband--the LORD (YHWH) Almighty
is his name-- the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;
he is called the God (Elohim) of all the earth.
(Isaiah 54:5 *parenthetical text added*)

"I am the LORD (YHWH), the God (Elohim) of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"
(Jeremiah 32:27 *parenthetical text added*)

EI ("אֱלֹהִים") / Eloah ("אֱלֹהִים") are both also translated in the lowercase "**God**", frequently in circumstances indicating the **great power, strength, and might** of GOD. "Eloah" appears in 56 verses, 41 of which are in the book of Job; and "EI" appears in 232 verses, usually in concert with other attributes of God, such as "El Shaddai", "El Elyon", "El Gibhor", etc.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD (YHWH) appeared to him and said, "I am God (EI) Almighty (Shaddai); walk before me faithfully and be blameless."
(Genesis 17:1 *parenthetical text added*)

"I am God (EI), the God (Elohim) of your father," he said.
"Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt,
for I will make you into a great nation there."
(Genesis 46:3 *parenthetical text added*)

Do not be terrified by them, for the LORD (YHWH) your God (Elohim),
who is among you, is a **great** and **awesome** God (EI).
(Deuteronomy 7:21 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

...our God (Elohim), the **great** God (EI), **mighty**
and **awesome**, who keeps his covenant of love...
(Nehemiah 9:32a *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

For who is God (Eloah) besides the LORD (YHWH)?
And who is the Rock except our God (Elohim)?
(Psalm 18:31 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

Your righteousness is like the **highest** (el) mountains,
your justice like the great deep. You, LORD (YHWH),
preserve both people and animals.
(Psalm 36:6 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

What's the difference between "YHWH Adonai" and "YHWH Elohim"?

Occasionally, Scripture employs the compound names "YHWH Adonai" ("יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי") and "YHWH Elohim" ("יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים"). Since the Jews replaced "YHWH" with "Adonai", whenever the compound name "YHWH Adonai" appears in the Hebrew Scriptures, in order to avoid duplication of "Adonai", they substituted "Elohim" for "Adonai" and read it as "Adonai Elohim".



And now . . . several thousand years later and working with several different English Bible translations and versions¹, the average non-linguist Bible student is left to sort out the difference between "LORD God" and "Lord GOD" in some Bibles. It can also be confusing determining when the lowercase "God" means "Adonai", "Elohim", or "El"/"Eloah".

The general rule of thumb is this:

- The uppercase "LORD" and "GOD" always represent the original Tetragrammaton "YHWH".
- The lowercase "Lord", "Sovereign". or "All-Powerful" always represent the original "Adonai" when it was not used as a substitute for "YHWH".
- The lowercase "God"..
 - represents "Elohim" when used in the Creation narrative, as a descriptor when interacting with His creation (as in "your/our/my/his/their God", the "God of"), or in place of GOD's name (as in "You" or "He");
 - represents "Adonai" when used in combination with "YHWH" (as in "LORD God"), except in the Creation narrative;
 - represents "El" or "Eloah" when used to refer to YHWH by reference (as in "He is God").

How is "YHWH Adonai" represented in English Bibles?

"YHWH Adonai" ("יהוה אֲדֹנָי") in the original Hebrew appears 347 times in the Old Testament. Following are examples of several verses—all based on the original "יהוה אֲדֹנָי" ("YHWH Adonai")—as they are represented in different English Bible translations/versions:

Isaiah 25:8

He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord (Adonai) GOD (YHWH) will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD (YHWH) hath spoken *it*.
(KJV *parenthetical text added*)

he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (YHWH) will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD (YHWH) has spoken.
(NIV *parenthetical text added*)

The LORD (YHWH) All-Powerful (Adonai) will destroy the power of death and wipe away all tears. No longer will his people be insulted everywhere. The LORD (YHWH) has spoken!
(CEV *parenthetical text added*)

Jeremiah 14:13

Then said I, Ah, Lord (Adonai) GOD (YHWH)! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.
(KJV *parenthetical text added*)

Then I said, Ah, O Lord (Adonai) Jehovah (YHWH)! Behold, the prophets are saying to them, You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have



famine; but I will give you true peace in this place.
(MKJV *parenthetical text added*)

Then I said, "Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (YHWH), you know that the prophets are telling the people that there will be no war or starvation, because you have promised, they say, that there will be only peace in our land."
(The Good News Bible *parenthetical text added*)

Ezekiel 39:25

Therefore thus saith the Lord (Adonai) GOD (YHWH); Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name;
(KJV *parenthetical text added*)

"Therefore thus says the Lord (Adonai) Yahweh (YHWH): 'Now I will reverse the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel. I will be jealous for my holy name.'
(WEB *parenthetical text added*)

"Therefore thus says the Lord (Adonai) GOD (YHWH): Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name."
(English Standard Version *parenthetical text added*)

How is "YHWH Elohim" represented in English Bibles?

As noted previously, the compound name "YHWH Elohim" only appears in the Creation narrative and whenever GOD is seen directly interacting with His creation.

Then the LORD (YHWH) God (Elohim) formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.
(Genesis 2:7 *parenthetical text added*)

The LORD (YHWH) God (Elohim) took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.
(Genesis 2:15 *parenthetical text added*)

- ²¹ The LORD (YHWH) God (Elohim) made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.
- ²² And the LORD (YHWH) God (Elohim) said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."
- ²³ So the LORD (YHWH) God (Elohim) banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.
(Genesis 3:21-23 *parenthetical text added*)

Then he prayed, "LORD(YHWH), God (Elohim) of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham.
(Genesis 24:12 *parenthetical text added*)

Of course, it would be most expedient and convenient to simply leave the above conclusions on page 45 as the final word. However, with so many different English translations today and scholarly differences of opinion, that is not possible.



For example, the Modern King James Version (MKJV) renders the Hebrew "Adonai" ("אֲדֹנָי") as "Jehovah" in several verses while most other English Bibles use the more accurate lowercase "Lord", as seen in the following examples.

	KJV	NIV	MKJV
Nehemiah 1:11	O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name	Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name.	O Jehovah, I pray You, let now Your ear be open to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name.
Psalms 51:15	O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.	Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.	O Jehovah, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.
Psalms 57:9	I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.	I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples.	I will praise You, O Jehovah, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations.
Isaiah 38:16	O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.	Lord, by such things people live; and my spirit finds life in them too. You restored me to health and let me live.	O Jehovah, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit; so You will recover me, and make me to live.

I encourage you to not only make note of the names in the Bible you normally use, but to consider looking up the verses in another version to compare and validate their accuracy. Then, as you read your Bible, insert and speak the Hebrew names and meditate on what they reveal about our wonderfully merciful, extravagantly loving, and abundantly compassionate GOD! In so doing, you will soon find yourself naturally drawn into worship, resulting in a more intimate and fulfilling relationship with this **all-powerful, inexplicable**, and yet **knowable** GOD!

Is the Trinity embodied in the plural nouns "Adonai" and "Elohim"?

As noted previously, "Adonai" is the emphatic **plural** form of "Adon", and "Elohim" is the masculine **plural** form of "Eloah".

While these names are written in the plural form, they regularly employ **singular** verbs and pronouns in Hebrew grammar and are **singular** in usage, as in...

For the LORD (YHWH) your God (Elohim) **is** God (Elohim)
of gods (elohim) and Lord (Adonai) of lords (adoni),
the great God (El), mighty and awesome, who **shows**
no partiality and **accepts** no bribes.
(Deuteronomy 10:17 TS *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)



(If using plural verbs along with the plural "Adonai" and "Elohim", the verse would read: "For the LORD your God **are** God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who **show** no partiality and **accept** no bribes.")

"How great you are, Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (YHWH)!
There **is** no one like you, and there **is** no God (Elohim)
but you, as we have heard with our own ears.

(2 Samuel 7:22 TS *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

(If using plural verbs along with the plural "Adonai" and "Elohim", the verse would read: "...There **are** no one like you, and there **are** no God but you...")

Surely God (Elohim) **is** my help; the Lord (Adonai) **is** the **one** who **sustains** me.
(Psalm 54:4 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

(If using plural verbs and pronouns along with the plural "Adonai" and "Elohim", the verse would read: "Surely God **are** my help; the Lord **are** the ones who **sustain** me.")

Many Christians view the plurality of "Adonai" and "Elohim" as proof of the Trinity. They argue that, acting in **usage** as singular nouns with singular verbs, the concept of a plurality of Persons embodied in the one GOD is at least **implied**, if not indirectly inferred.

Consider, too, that whenever the word "elohim" appears in Scripture in reference to **pagan** gods, **plural** pronouns and verbs are also used.

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him,
"Get rid of the foreign gods (elohim) that **are** with you,
and purify yourselves and change your clothes.
(Genesis 35:2 *emphasis added*)

Do not bow down before their **gods** (elohim)
or worship **them** or follow **their** practices.
(Exodus 23:24 *emphasis added*)

Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away
and worship other **gods** (elohim) and bow down to **them**.
(Deuteronomy 11:16 *emphasis added*)

This then begs the question: Might Scripture's use of **plural** pronouns and verbs for **pagan** gods and yet **singular** verbs and pronouns for **Adonai** and **Elohim** be to deliberately convey the concept of plurality in the one Godhead?

Keep in mind that the Bible majors in oxymorons with such statements as "the greatest must be the least" (Luke 9:48), "to live, you must die" (Matthew 16:24-25), "the first shall be last, and the last shall be first" (Mark 10:31). Thus, we cannot overlook Scripture's use of both singular **and** plural pronouns at times in reference to both names "Adonai" and "Elohim"—which would suggest that the plural are actually **one** and the one is actually **more** than one.

²⁶ Then God (Elohim) said, "Let **us** make mankind in **our** image, in **our** likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in



the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
27 So God (Elohim) created mankind in **his** own image, in the image of God (Elohim) **he** created them; male and female **he** created them.
(Genesis 1:26-27 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

And the LORD (YHWH) God (Elohim) said,
"The man has now become like one of **us**, knowing good and evil.
(Genesis 3:22a *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

Then I heard the voice of the Lord (Adonai) saying,
"Whom shall **I** send? And who will go for **us**?"
And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"
(Isaiah 6:8 *emphasis and parenthetical text added*)

Some suggest a plural of majesty or intensity.

On the other hand, some Bible scholars suggest that the plural "Adonai" and "Elohim", including the use of plural pronouns, refers only to plurals of **majesty**, such as was common for kings of other nations. A modern-day example of this would be what is commonly referred to as the "royal we" often used by persons of high office, such as the Queen or the Pope. In situations in which it is used, the dignitary is typically speaking not only in his/her personal capacity, but also in an official capacity as the leader of a nation or institution. In some cultures, usage of the plural form tends to be perceived as more polite than the singular forms.

However, there is no evidence in Scripture or other historical records of any King of Israel ever referring to himself in the plural. Therefore, there is very little likelihood of such usage being employed in reference to Almighty GOD.

Other scholars suggest that the plural "Adonai" and "Elohim" refers to a fullness of **divine strength** or a plural of **intensity**. They argue that the Hebrews often expressed a word in the plural to give it a stronger meaning, as in Isaiah 6:3 with "Holy" being expressed three times or Jesus repeating "Verily" ("Truly") for emphasis.

In his *Commentary on Genesis*, Dr. Adam Clarke argued quite the contrary:

"The original word אֱלֹהִים Elohim, God, is certainly the plural form of אֵל El, or אֱלֹה Eloah, and has long been supposed, by the most eminently learned and pious men, to imply a plurality of Persons in the Divine nature. As this plurality appears in so many parts of the sacred writings to be confined to three Persons, hence the doctrine of the Trinity, which has formed a part of the creed of all those who have been deemed sound in the faith, from the earliest ages of Christianity.

"Nor are the Christians singular in receiving this doctrine, and in deriving it from the first words of Divine revelation. An eminent Jewish Rabbi, Simeon ben Joachi, in his comment on the sixth section of Leviticus, has these remarkable words: 'Come and see the mystery of the word Elohim; there are three degrees, and each degree by itself alone, and yet notwithstanding they are all one, and joined together in one, and are not divided from each other.'

"He must be strangely prejudiced indeed who cannot see that the doctrine of a Trinity, and of a Trinity in unity, is expressed in the above words."²



Admittedly, I may be too much a romanticist to fully indulge a purely objective academic approach when striving to know the Most High GOD on a more intimate level. I simply cannot separate GOD's use of plural proper nouns with singular verbs and pronouns and His use of plural verbs and pronouns elsewhere in Scripture.

I find it highly improbable that the original Hebrew texts would employ *singular* pronouns and verbs with the names "Adonai" and "Elohim" and plural pronouns for Himself in other places unless GOD deliberately intended to convey the concept of *plural identities* in the *one God*.

Does the plurality of "Adonai" and "Elohim" prove the Trinity?

No. I wish it were that simple. However, as there is no way to perfectly and completely *understand* the doctrine of the Trinity, there is, therefore, no definitive way to explain or *prove* it.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."
(Isaiah 55:9)

Although we can understand some facts about the relationship among the three, ultimately, the concept of three distinct Persons forming one GOD is incomprehensible to the human mind! However, this does not mean the Trinity is not true or that it is not based on the Bible. And it does not mean that we take it only on faith without earnest study and contemplation.

...the plural words "Adonai" and "Elohim" teach us that no *finite* word(s) can adequately define the *infinite* personality of God.

There is much Scriptural support to validate the doctrine of the Trinity, not as an explicitly stated doctrine, but as a *revealed* one. However, the names "Adonai" and "Elohim"—in and of themselves and apart from the other Scriptural proofs—are not sufficient to indisputably *prove* the doctrine of the Trinity.³

Meditation

It is truly unfortunate that we have substituted the lesser titles "Lord" and "God" to represent our Sovereign Most High GOD. It's only in learning what *He* revealed to us and wants us to know about Himself in the names/designations *He* used that we can fully render to Him "all the *glory due His name!*" (Psalm 29:2 *emphasis added*)

Whether plurals of *majesty* . . . plurals of *intensity* . . . or implying a *Triune GOD* . . . the plurality of "Adonai" and "Elohim" reinforces the point made in the discussion of the pronunciation of "YHWH". The Most High GOD's names embody so much more about the infinite personality of GOD than our mortal minds can grasp. Just as there's no human sound that can adequately replicate the unique sound of GOD's distinctive name, all of our attempts to define Him by the finite words we *do* understand fall far short of defining all that He is and all that He wants to be to us!



As Nathan Stone wrote in *Names of God* concerning the name "Elohim":

"There is blessing and comfort in this great name of God signifying supreme power, sovereignty, and glory on the one hand, for 'thine [Elohim] is the kingdom and the power and the glory'; and on the other hand signifying a covenant relationship which He is ever faithful to keep. Thus He says to us, 'I will be to you Elohim,' that we may say, '**My Elohim**;' in Him will I trust.' (Psalm 91:2 *emphasis added*)."⁴

¹ A **translation** seeks to render the Hebrew or Greek text into a precise and accurate equivalent in another language without changing the text.

A **version** (or adaptation) intentionally changes the text, purportedly for greater clarity or understanding.

Technically, as it is not possible to achieve a "perfect translation" from one completely different writing system and culture to another, all translations are "adaptations" to the extent necessary. Some scholars argue that the difference between a Bible "translation" and "version" is similar to whether the glass is "half empty" or "half full."

² Clarke, Dr. Adam (1762-1832). *The Adam Clarke Commentary*, Genesis 1, Verse 1. Public Domain.

³ My Redeemer Lives. *The Trinity: Revealed Doctrine*, and *The Trinity: One in Purpose, Power, and Ministry*, <http://www.myredeemerlives.com/mbs/trinity.html>, np, 10/01/18.

⁴ Stone, Nathan. *Names of God*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1944, 2010. p. 32.

